

Explore the Bible: March 13

Shared • I Thessalonians 2:1-12

By Cyndi Grace



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We need to remember as a church that we have an enemy who wants to stop the Gospel from spreading, any way he can. Sadly, for many in this generation, it doesn't take much.

Society has conditioned us to shy away from being bold because of political correctness gone awry. Truth is now considered "hate speech" and can be punishable by the law. Being called "judgmental" because of biblical beliefs seems to be our kryptonite.

It appears some are more concerned with being called a name rather than true persecution. I am not at all surprised. It is the enemy's go-to agenda because it works so well. The father of lies, if he can't stop someone from sharing the Good News, will resort to destroying the reputation of that person.

That seems to be what had happened to the Apostle Paul in our Scripture study for this week. It wasn't enough that Paul had been expelled from Thessalonica, but those who were in opposition to him also had spread lies about his motives for preaching about Jesus. It seems the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Paul was not going to allow those lies to remain unchallenged. He defended his message, which was not deception but the

truth. His response was not given for any other motive than to bring people to the saving works of Jesus. He reminded this church that even in the midst of extreme opposition, God had done incredible things in the lives of these people. The truth was, Paul and Silas had spoken boldly and lives were changed.

Verse four is a wake-up call to today's congregations: *Instead, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people, but rather God who examines our heart.* (CSB).

I have had the blessed opportunity to be a women's conference speaker for the last 20-plus years. When I first began, I admit, I wanted women to like me. My messages were truthful but a bit fluffy. If I heard someone was hurt by something I said, I would feel badly.

God convicted me of this: I had been called to teach the Word of God without compromise and I was not being faithful to this call, so I began to teach on the harder Scriptures with more boldness than I felt in my spirit.

The hard truths were taught in a loving way but without a thought of what someone might think. A funny thing happened. The harder the subject, the more the women were drawn to it. I would hear comments from some who said, "Why aren't we hearing this more?"

Be assured, it had nothing to do with me but everything to do with the power of God's Word. There was a hunger for truth because that is where hope was found. The ploys of the enemy to make me afraid to speak had failed.

There is another warning in our Scripture passage. We as a church must be open to hearing truth even if it is uncomfortable. We don't need to become like those who spoke against Paul because he disturbed the status quo.

Often, congregations are entrenched in the customary way

things are done and when a new staff member or teacher comes and suggests a change, it is imperative we not demean that person or tell untruths about them in order to turn others away.

The plan might be new, different, and perhaps uneasy to us, but it very well could be the very thing needed for the Holy Spirit to move in the church. I have seen many well-meaning church members make it extremely hard for a new person because he/she upset the routine. This is not God's way of working in a church.

The final lesson we can glean from this week's Scripture is that when we truly love others, we will speak absolute truth into their lives. Paul likens himself to a father who encourages his children to live rightly. It's not mean-spirited to encourage those we love to live rightly. On the contrary, it is absolutely the best thing we can do.

So, let's become a church that speaks truth in love, is willing to accept truth given, and be bold enough to encourage others to live as Christ would have them live even if it is uncomfortable. Then we will become the shining light to a darkened world.

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